

For Immediate Release
March 12, 2018
Brian Field, Commissioner

DODGE COUNTY OFFICIALS REMIND DRIVERS TO STAY SAFE THIS CONSTRUCTION SEASON

Dodge County Highway Commissioner Brian Field urges people to drive carefully in highway work zones throughout the 2018 construction season.

“Road workers are just like anyone else. They want to do a good job and make it home to their families at night,” said Field. “We ask that everyone take extra time and stay alert on the roads.”

There were more than 2,700 work zone crashes throughout the state in 2017, according to preliminary state figures. Work zone crashes in Wisconsin last year caused 1,067 injuries and six deaths.

In Wisconsin, work zones include major highway construction and rehabilitation, maintenance, emergency response, utility work, municipal projects and more – any time in which there are flashing lights, signs, barrels, or workers on the road.

National Work Zone Awareness Week takes place April 9 through 13. The theme is “Work Zone Safety: Everybody’s Responsibility.”

Wednesday, April 11, is “Go Orange Day,” in which people are asked to wear something orange in support of highway safety. Social media pictures and posts are welcome using the #OrangeForSafety hashtag.

Work Zone Awareness Week is sponsored by federal, state, and local transportation officials to draw attention to the safety needs of road workers during construction season. Generally, crashes occur when drivers speed through a work zone, do not pay attention to changing road conditions, run into other vehicles or highway equipment, or drive off the road completely.

Things happen very fast in work zones, even when the speed limit is reduced. It’s important to eliminate distractions, slow down, and avoid tailgating.

While typical construction work zones are prevalent throughout the county and state, there are also significant numbers of maintenance operations that may be short-term or moving operations. Drivers are reminded of the state’s “Move Over, Slow Down” law which requires drivers to shift lanes or slow down in order to provide a safety buffer for a squad car, ambulance, fire truck, tow truck, utility vehicle, or highway maintenance vehicle that is stopped on the side of a road with its warning lights flashing.

Additionally, drivers are reminded that a new law took effect in October 2016 making it illegal to talk on a hand-held mobile device while driving through a work zone. Violators face fines of up to \$40 on first offense and \$100 for subsequent offenses, plus costs.

Before hitting the road, drivers are encouraged to check 511 Wisconsin (511wi.gov and @511WI on Twitter), or use the 511 Wisconsin smartphone app for updates on road conditions and traffic flow.

Giving undivided attention to the road:

- Eliminate distractions like eating, drinking, talking on the phone, or using electronic devices.
- Expect the unexpected. Speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be changed, and people and equipment may be working on or near the road.
- Slow down. A car traveling 60 MPH travels 88 feet per second and the faster you go, the longer it takes to stop.
- Give yourself room. Rear-end collisions are the most common work zone crashes, so don't tailgate.
- Allow about three seconds of braking distance. Look for signs. Orange, diamond-shaped signs usually give you ample warning of lane closings, construction areas, flaggers, and other workers ahead.
- Be patient. If you don't see workers, that doesn't mean they're not there. Observe the signs until you see one that says you've left the work zone.
- Plan ahead. Leave early or map out an alternate route. Find the latest road conditions and work zone news at 511 Wisconsin.
- Follow the law. Slow down and move over, if possible, when you see flashing lights.
- Consider turning off the phone until you reach your destination.
- During a long drive, consider leaving a voice mail explaining how long you'll be unavailable.
- If you have to make a call, find a secure place to pull over and stop, such as a wayside or gas station.

Learn more at <http://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/safety/education/workzone/default.aspx>



Work Zone Safety

Briefing and General Talking Points

March 2018

Background

- There were more than 2,700 crashes in Wisconsin road construction and maintenance zones in 2017. This works out to an average of more than seven daily throughout the year.
- The crashes in 2017 caused 1,067 injuries and six deaths (preliminary figures).
- There have been well over 2,000 work zone crashes in each of the last three years.
- In Wisconsin, work zones include major highway construction and rehabilitation, maintenance, emergency response, utility work, municipal projects and more – any time in which there are flashing lights, signs, barrels or workers on the road.
- Between 2012 and 2017, there were 55 fatalities recorded as a result of crashes in Wisconsin work zones.

Talking Points

- Even at the reduced speed of 55 mph, you are still covering the length of a football field in less than four seconds while driving through a work zone.
- With narrow, shifting lanes, work zones can present a challenge to all drivers under any circumstances. This is why it is so important to limit distractions.
- Inattentive driving was listed as the cause of crashes killing 17 between 2012 and 2017.
- We ask that drivers take necessary precautions when entering work zones, and also use tools like 511 Wisconsin to get valuable information about road work and delays so that they don't find themselves in such a hurry.
- Wisconsin gained an additional tool to help protect drivers and workers last year. Starting in October 2016, it became illegal to talk on a hand held cell phone while driving through a work zone. Fines start at \$40, plus costs. "See Orange Cones? Please Put Down the Phones."
- Remember that work zones aren't limited to major construction. They also include maintenance, emergency vehicle stops, utility work and even garbage pickup. Being able to identify a work zone is important for drivers to stay safe.
- We ask that drivers expect the unexpected and stay alert at all times.

How can people help?

- Most importantly, drive safely, avoiding distractions and obeying posted speed limits. Be courteous and patient. Set a good example for others on the road.
- Advocate for safe driving. Show support for work zone safety by using social media hashtags - #NWZAW, #WorkZoneSafety, or #OrangeForSafety
- Participate in "Go Orange Day" on Wednesday, April 11, but wearing orange in support of safety. (#OrangeForSafety)



Work Zone Safety

Intended for Internal Use and Background
March 2018

- There were more than 2,700 crashes in Wisconsin road construction and maintenance zones in 2017. This works out to an average of more than seven daily throughout the year.
- In Wisconsin, work zones include major highway construction and rehabilitation, maintenance, emergency response, utility work, municipal projects and more – any time in which there are flashing lights, signs, barrels or workers on the road.
- There have been well over 2,000 work zone crashes in each of the last three years.
- The crashes in 2017 caused 1,067 injuries and six deaths (preliminary figures). Fatal crashes occurred in:
 - Clark County
 - Milwaukee County
 - Shawano County
 - Waukesha County
- Our understanding is that each of the six work zone traffic fatalities in 2017 was a driver or passenger.
- Between 2012 and 2017, there were 55 fatalities recorded as a result of crashes in Wisconsin work zones. Analysis of these numbers shows (note there may be overlap in some cases):
 - Drug/alcohol was linked to 21 of the fatalities.
 - Inattentive driving was linked to 17.
 - Exceeding the speed limit was linked to nine.
 - Of the 55 fatalities: Milwaukee county had 10, Kenosha and Washington each had 4, Brown, Dane, Dodge and Fond Du Lac each had 3.